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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 30 March 1999, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mrs. ANDERSON (Ireland)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE MINISTER OF STATE IN CHARGE OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF CAMEROON

1. Mr. MVONDO AYOLO (Cameroon), speaking on behalf of Mr. Kontchou Kouemegni, Minister of State in charge of Foreign Affairs, said that the national programmes established by the Member States of the United Nations should reflect the achievements of the past 50 years, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly and Commission resolutions. In honour of the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Cameroon had undertaken a massive, six-month national programme of celebration, during which the first session of the Children's Parliament had been held in the National Assembly. The children had questioned members of the Government on the management of the city and on the promotion and protection of human rights. In order to raise awareness of human rights, care had been taken to ensure the participation in the celebrations of representatives of every section of society, of each of the country's 10 provinces and of every town within each province.

2. The programme had culminated in the inauguration in Yaoundé of a square and a monument dedicated to human rights. To be repeated in towns up and down the country, the dedication would be a mark of Cameroon's commitment to the promotion and respect of human rights for all, as a fruit of the policy its President had implemented methodically and determinedly since 1982.

3. Millions of people around the world, however, still lived in ignorance or poverty, in the grip of hunger or oppression. Since development, human rights and democracy were interdependent, his Government was in favour of a concerted effort to promote human rights. Specific actions could include the building of some form of pantheon, in which the world could honour those who had best served the cause of human rights; the inclusion of a new generation of rights in the Universal Declaration, taking account of the social, scientific and technical developments over the years; and the establishment of a universal international human and peoples' rights court that would affirm the primacy of the force of law over the law of force.

4. His Government was also in favour of increasing and strengthening the technical assistance of the United Nations advisory services. It had taken the step of introducing human rights into school and higher education curricula and disseminating human rights through the use of modern technology and training, thus helping to make the third millennium the millennium of human rights.

5. Cameroon's right to live in peace had been violated since December 1993 by the armed, illegal occupation of the peninsula of Bakassi by Nigerian forces. Since early 1994, his Government had been appealing to the Security Council, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the International Court of Justice; and it had complied with the Court's decisions despite the numerous violations perpetrated by the Nigerians.

6. The reciprocal repatriation of prisoners of war in December 1998 had led the international community to assume that relations between the two countries

were returning to normal. Unfortunately, however, the Nigerian provocations continued, with the construction of public buildings and the organization of local and national elections in the occupied Cameroon territory. His Government therefore called on the international community to provide active assistance in maintaining the peace both during and after the expected judgement of the Court, with which both sides should scrupulously comply.

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF NIGERIA

7. Mr. OLISEMEKA (Nigeria) said that, during the century that was drawing to its close, much had been achieved in the field of human rights - most recently the establishment of the Permanent International Criminal Court - but there had also been excesses and failures. Much of humanity still remained impoverished, deprived of the real benefits of the unprecedented economic growth and technological improvement.

8. The protection of human rights constituted an investment in global peace and security. Aware of the importance of a conducive environment for the enjoyment of political, social, economic and cultural rights, including the right to development, his Government would continue to fulfil its obligations under major international instruments, not least because they were in tune with the core values of Nigeria's history, culture and traditions.

9. In previous years, it had been difficult for his predecessor to provide justification for the then Government's activities but, since June 1998, far-reaching measures had been adopted to consolidate national cohesion, develop the economy and create an environment conducive to the enjoyment of human rights. A Transition Programme for a return to civilian rule had been put in place. Elections adjudged free and fair by the majority of the people and international observers had been held, rekindling hope in the political process.

10. There was no longer a single political prisoner in Nigeria. Even those who had plotted against the Government were free. Several decrees impinging on fundamental freedoms had been repealed or amended. While Decree No. 2 was still on the statute book, its provisions had not been invoked against any individual under the current Administration and the necessary machinery had been set in motion to review it, along with all other legislation, so as to bring it into conformity with his Government's international obligations.

11. The independence of the judiciary had been reinforced through improved conditions of service for judges and legal officers. More judges had been appointed. The Government had also undertaken an extensive reform of the prisons by acting to prevent overcrowding and improve living conditions for prisoners and service conditions for personnel.

12. Freedom of association for all trade unions had been fully restored. Workers had conducted elections and the Nigerian Labour Congress had acquired a democratically elected leadership. The press and electronic media enjoyed unfettered freedom and their role in building support for democratic governance and accountability in Nigeria was cherished. The Government's erstwhile critics had warmly welcomed all those changes.

13. Conscious of the links between sustainable democracy, stability and development, the Administration had embarked on major economic reform to stimulate growth and encourage investment. It was gratifying that, in spite of the unfavourable external economic environment, investor confidence had returned.

14. There was thus no longer any justification for the retention of the mechanism of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Nigeria. It was time to move beyond General Assembly resolution 53/161, which recognized the improvements that had been made since 1994 when the situation of human rights in Nigeria had first appeared on the Commission's agenda, and to revoke the Special Rapporteur's mandate. The Commission might also wish to commend the Nigerian Head of State on the courageous steps he had taken.

RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA AND ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION (agenda item 6) (continued) (E/CN.4/1999/12, 15 and Add.1 and 17; E/CN.4/1999/NGO/4, 5, 6 and 60)

15. Mr. MOHI (Observer for Hungary) said that the Council of Europe had already begun preparatory work on its contribution to the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, notably through the organization of a European Conference on the same theme, in order to demonstrate that combating racism and intolerance was an integral part of the protection of human rights and that the European Governments gave priority to the matter. In view of the multicultural nature of European societies, the European conference would focus on ways to promote that cultural diversity for the benefit of democratic societies. It would also demonstrate that tackling racism was not a question of imposing solutions but rather of finding ways of working together. The Council had had previous experience in hosting interregional meetings prior to world conferences.

16. An ad hoc meeting of government experts in February 1999 had indicated that the European Conference should be forward-looking, practical and action-oriented. It should also provide a forum for the communities concerned and increase public awareness. The meeting had underlined the need for the broadest possible participation by relevant non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Initiatives had also been taken to provide financial support for NGO participation.

17. Mr. MERIC (Observer for Turkey) said that there had been a resurgence of racism in new and more subtle forms. It was not racism as an official policy but it arose under the noses of Governments in the midst of multicultural, often prosperous, societies and was due, above all, to latent, institutionalized discrimination in the structure of employment. Migrant workers had settled permanently in their adopted countries; in some cases the third generation had entered the labour market. At a time of rising unemployment, therefore, intolerance of migrant workers, who were racially despised and regarded as subhuman, was on the increase. The migrants reacted defiantly, embracing their traditions and religion yet more closely, and the racism directed at them correspondingly intensified.

18. In Europe, the competition in the distribution of power between nation States and the European Union institutions gave rise to a feeling that the

nation State was disintegrating. Many groups were undergoing an identity crisis and some were being diverted from patriotism to extreme forms of nationalism or even racism. That situation was compounded by the fact that some inhabitants of European countries were citizens with full rights and others were alien residents with limited rights. The leaders of ultra-right parties stoked the fires of racism and xenophobia with talk of "cultural relativism".

19. He was concerned at the increasing use of the Internet and other new communication technologies for the purpose of disseminating racist ideology. Developing an ethic for the use of such technologies would not impinge on the freedom of expression; new technologies should rather help to combat racist opinions. He reiterated his Government's support for the forthcoming World Conference.

20. Mr. VIGNY (Observer for Switzerland) said that, although the prohibition of racial discrimination was part of international law, the reality was that racism still existed. The forthcoming World Conference should therefore focus on preventive and educational measures. Europe was already preparing for the Conference. A preliminary meeting, attended by the 40 member countries of the Council of Europe, had singled out four main objectives: legal protection against racism at the national, regional and international levels; policies and practices against racism at the national level; awareness-raising and education to combat racism at every level; and the role of the media and the new technologies. One goal, spanning all four focus points, should be to examine the situation of all groups and individuals who were vulnerable to racism, at the same time considering prevention, contemporary forms of racism, collective memory and globalization.

21. His Government was particularly concerned to combat the expression of racist opinion on the Internet, which was a clear abuse of the freedom of opinion and expression. Individual responsibility or codes of conduct at the national or international levels were not sufficient. There should be international legislation to make such activities a criminal offence, despite the political, technical and procedural difficulties. His Government thus intended to convene an international conference on ways of combating racist and anti-Semitic sites on the Internet. The measures that emerged from the conference would then be submitted to the World Conference for adoption at the global level.

22. His Government was also in favour of the widest possible participation by NGOs in the World Conference and the preparations for it, given the importance of the role played by civil society. In that context, his delegation believed that sport - particularly team sports - could play a positive role in combating racism, although it could also have a negative effect if it became the tool of nationalism. International sporting bodies should thus be encouraged to participate in the World Conference, as both partners and sponsors. The financial problems facing the World Conference could, indeed, be partly resolved thereby. States and other interested institutions should, in any case, be asked for voluntary contributions.

23. The Swiss Federal Commission against Racism, an independent institution, though represented on his delegation, would continue its preparations for the

World Conference. It had recently issued a major report on anti-Semitism in Switzerland and was currently drawing up recommendations to ensure harmonious coexistence with the approximately 300,000 Muslims living in Switzerland.

24. Mr. MONTENEGRO MALLONA (Observer for Nicaragua), speaking on behalf of the Central American Group of countries (GRUCA), expressed concern at the appearance of new forms of racism around the world. The international community must intensify its efforts to eliminate all forms of intolerance, particularly through education, which could help to create new generations free from prejudice. National programmes to inculcate the values embodied in the Universal Declaration must be actively promoted. Social programmes and school curricula should promote awareness and respect for different cultures, while immigration policies should be reviewed with a view to eliminating discriminatory practices. The information media, including the Internet, had a significant role to play in that regard.

25. The notion of shared responsibility in the fight against racism and racial discrimination was of particular importance as the Commission began preparing for the World Conference. He expressed support for the statement made at the previous meeting by the representative of Guatemala on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC) and commended the Working Group on the progress it had achieved on procedural and substantive issues at the Commission's current session. Broad-based participation in regional preparations for the World Conference was essential. He agreed with the High Commissioner that the Conference should focus on the adoption of practical measures, and he urged that adequate resources be made available to ensure the success of the Conference.

26. Mr. KHORRAM (Observer for the Islamic Republic of Iran) said that many forms of racism were on the rise even as the international community prepared for the World Conference. His Government had offered to host the Asian regional preparatory meeting for the Conference and urged that adequate financing for all the regional conferences be secured. As a culture of tolerance in national societies and the international community as a whole was essential to protecting human rights and discouraging racism and racial discrimination, the Conference must identify ways and means of promoting tolerance.

27. He was concerned at the rising trend towards discrimination and violence against Muslims. The phenomenon of "Islamophobia" rightly fell within the mandate of both the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and the Special Rapporteur on religious intolerance and should therefore be studied by both.

28. Mr. TEKLE (Observer for Eritrea), acknowledging that significant strides had been made in eradicating racism and related problems, said that reverses had occurred in some parts of the world, including Europe and Africa, particularly in the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa. His own country had itself suffered from ethnic policies and the concomitant violations of human rights.

29. The Government of one of the countries of the region had made ethnic origin a criterion for perpetrating acts that harmed individuals and their

property. Many of the victims of those violations were, in fact, citizens of the country that perpetrated them, yet the Government of that country did not distinguish between those Eritreans who were citizens there and those who were not.

30. The policy pursued by the State in question was based on the supremacy of the economic and political interests of the ruling ethnic group. The home territory of that group was being expanded at the expense of other parts of that State or neighbouring States, by either legislative or bellicose means. Ethnic hatred was officially sanctioned and promoted. Such a system provided no opportunity for democratic dialogue or dissent. The bloodshed and violence in that region which had been predicted in the Commission by an NGO three years previously had become a reality.

31. The leader of the country in question had repeatedly declared that his Government had the unrestricted right to deport foreigners on ethnic grounds and that such a policy did not concern the international community. However, human rights were a legitimate concern of everyone and he therefore requested the Commission to extend the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance to include ethnic discrimination and intolerance in the Horn of Africa.

32. Mr. MENGESHA (Observer for Ethiopia) said that the definition of racial discrimination in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination was broad enough to encompass distinctions based on national or ethnic origin. A State was thus unable to declare that it had no policy based on such distinctions even as it persecuted people on those grounds. Such situations had become commonplace for thousands of persons living under brutal regimes, particularly in time of war.

33. Moreover, when a State was defeated in a war, it was liable to take vindictive measures against innocent civilians belonging to the victor's ethnic group, even when it was clear that such individuals had played no role in the conflict. Persecution was encouraged by racist propaganda irresponsibly disseminated by the Government. Such criminal acts, which constituted grave breaches of international humanitarian law, were being committed against Ethiopian nationals by the authorities of a neighbouring country, who should be held responsible for their war crimes and human rights violations.

34. Mr. JOKONYA (Observer for Zimbabwe) said there was no doubt that colour still constituted the point of reference in so-called civilized societies. The bravado of the individuals who had recently perpetrated racist murders in the United States of America merely reflected the bigotry inherent in society at large. Unless the international community went beyond verbal pronouncements and fundamentally changed the world's socio-economic and political structure, such racism would persist.

35. The international community's apparent reluctance to eliminate racism derived largely from its failure to accept that gross violations of human rights were its legitimate concern. The High Commissioner had rightly noted

that States must not only create suitable legal systems but must also promote basic humanitarian values and actively enforce measures to combat racial prejudice.

36. He commended the report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism (E/CN.4/1999/15) but noted with dismay its account of racist candidates campaigning for political office in various countries. The report also provided disturbing information about new forms of racism, particularly in developed countries, including institutionalized discrimination against immigrants. Unfortunately, even the enactment of stringent legal measures to prevent racism were ineffective without a relentless commitment to their unbiased implementation. Efforts to promote tolerance must be made at the level of the family, since children learned racism from their elders. The international community should support the convening of the World Conference and demand that adequate resources be provided to ensure its success.

37. Mr. SOUALEM (Observer for Algeria) said that, if the international community could eliminate apartheid, it ought to be able to combat more recent forms of racism, xenophobia and intolerance, which posed a serious threat to world stability, security and peace. Such phenomena, generated in part by the world economic crisis, spared no region of the world, with immigrant communities and migrant workers being the frequent victims. Scapegoating of those individuals led to the open espousal of racist and xenophobic ideas in political circles and in society at large.

38. The international community must mobilize to combat the disturbing trend toward racist discourse. States that had not yet recognized the competence of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to receive communications from individuals and groups must be urged to do so, and the countries that had expressed reservations to article 4 of the Convention should withdraw them.

39. The World Conference in 2001 must not be a merely symbolic media event but must lead to a commitment on the part of the international community to forestall the social, ethnic, religious and linguistic confrontations that threatened to degenerate into armed conflicts.

40. Mr. DIENE (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that, at the request of African and Caribbean countries, UNESCO had launched in 1994 the Slave Route project to study the slave trade between Africa and the Americas, with emphasis on the resulting cultural, ethnic and spiritual interaction in the countries of the Americas and the Caribbean. The ideological underpinnings of the slave trade merited particular attention, since race continued to be an important factor in the societies of the countries where the slave trade had flourished.

41. The French National Assembly had recently voted to declare the slave trade a crime against humanity. That pioneering and exemplary step should be emulated by the United Nations and by other countries that had been historically involved in the trade. For its part, UNESCO would continue its educational activities aimed at promoting greater understanding of the slave trade.

42. Mr. MIKHNEVICH (Observer for Belarus) said that social harmony was of great political significance, for it promoted economic and political development. Many different nationalities lived comfortably together in Belarus. When differences arose between ethnic groups they generally did not become confrontational. Mixed marriages occurred frequently, reflecting the high level of tolerance that existed in the country. Current social policies reflected a desire for mutual understanding, dialogue and peaceful settlement of ethnic problems. There had been a noticeable increase in the attention paid by the authorities to the problems of national minorities.

43. His Government believed that a legislative foundation was necessary for the formulation of policy in any area. One of the first laws passed by the Belarusian Parliament in 1991 concerned citizenship, which was the entitlement of any individual residing in the country regardless of ethnic affiliation or religion. In 1992, a law on national minorities was passed which established the legal foundation for the relations between ethnic groups. The desires of national minorities for mutual understanding and harmony were realized through the establishment of associations which brought different communities together to discuss problems in a constructive and friendly manner. In addition, national minorities had their own media publications.

44. Efforts to deal with national issues in Belarus had not always achieved the results anticipated, but Belarus remained one of the few former republics of the Soviet Union in which such problems had been settled without bloodshed.

45. Mr. ZAHRAN (Observer for Egypt) said the objectives of the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination had not been achieved, as recent ethnic conflicts posed new challenges for the international community. His delegation looked forward to participating in the World Conference and endorsed the decision taken regarding participation in regional and interregional preparatory events as well as the proposals put forward in the Working Group at the current session of the Commission. All concerned must work to ensure that the Conference's aims were achieved.

46. One topic that should be dealt with at the Conference was the ill-treatment of immigrants. The States parties to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination should develop legal measures to deal with violations of immigrants' rights, and States that had not done so should become parties to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. The International Labour Organization (ILO) should address the problem occurring in many developed countries, where racist accusations were made that immigrants deprived citizens of employment opportunities. UNESCO should also strengthen its efforts to promote tolerance and education, which were the key to combating racism and racial discrimination.

47. Mr. PIETROSANTI (Transnational Radical Party), speaking also on behalf of the International Romani Union, said that the Gypsies were always foreigners wherever they found themselves. They did not wish to be a State but they did want the status of a nation. Gypsy history cut across the traditional identity and coincidence between the concepts of State and nation,

and it was, consequently, in the interest of each and every individual represented and organized in States that the international community should help the Gypsy nation.

48. The United Nations should exploit the rich political and cultural treasure of the Roma nation. States should help the Gypsies to establish their own schools in which their culture, tradition, language and values could be transmitted to their children. It was in the interests of the States themselves to do so.

49. He asked the Commission to charge the Special Rapporteur to deliver a special report at its next session on racial discrimination against Gypsies, and suggested that a specific item on the Roma nation be included in the agenda of the forthcoming World Conference.

50. Mr. WADLOW (Association for World Education) said that the Special Rapporteur's report (E/CN.4/1999/15 and Add.1) showed only the tip of the iceberg of racism, ethnic nationalism and discrimination. With the exception of former Yugoslavia, it did not deal with any of the countries to which Special Rapporteurs were entrusted, nor did it deal with the majority of countries cited in the reports of the thematic rapporteurs. It was to be hoped that, at the World Conference, it would be possible for the Secretariat to provide a consolidated document in which all the information given by all the special rapporteurs would be presented country by country.

51. The Special Rapporteur's report did raise clearly, through its quotation of government replies, the problems of structural discrimination, which needed to be addressed in detail. The Governments of Mexico and Turkey referred to the problem of migrant workers, and the Government of India provided some information on scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Such structural aspects of discrimination were close to the mandates of the experts and special rapporteurs dealing with extreme poverty, the right to development, the right to education, the right to food and structural adjustment policies. An integrated approach must be adopted to structural discrimination, especially in the working documents for the World Conference.

52. He hoped that the Commission would, at its current session, adopt a resolution on implementation of human rights instruments dealing with the punishment of the crime of genocide.

53. Mr. LITTMAN (Association of World Citizens), speaking also on behalf of Christian Solidarity International, said that there was talk of a draft resolution being proposed to the Commission which would condemn alleged "attacks on Islam" or "blasphemy". The adoption of such a resolution would be an unmitigated disaster for the Commission. The struggle to combat racism in all its forms, including anti-Semitism, through serious scholarship and freedom of thought, opinion and expression, should not be curtailed at the United Nations by auto-censorship as a result of doctrinal accusations of "blasphemy".

54. The Special Rapporteur's current report (E/CN.4/1999/15) contained a paragraph entitled "Racism and racial discrimination against Arabs" followed by two paragraphs entitled "Anti-Semitism". Those paragraphs dealt only with

anti-Semitism in Europe and Russia and contained not a word on Islamist and Arab anti-Semitism, a subject which had caused a furore in 1997 in connection with the Special Rapporteur's report to the Commission at its fifty-third session (E/CN.4/1997/71). That report had been "corrected" (E/CN.4/1997/71/Corr.1), in an act of auto-censorship, and the Commission had adopted its decision No. 1997/125, subsequently known as the "blasphemy-censorship" decision. His Organization's warnings at the time of the dangers of auto-censorship had been fully justified by subsequent events.

55. Mr. ARASANZ (International Organization for the Development of Freedom of Education) said that an NGO affiliate of his own Organization, International Cooperation, had been developing the SERADE programme in cooperation with the European Commission and the Spanish Government, the main aim being to encourage young people to develop responsible attitudes towards racism and work to promote human rights. For the past five years, volunteers from International Cooperation had been helping Spanish schoolchildren to mark 21 November as the Day of Solidarity with the immigrant population suffering from various forms of intolerance and xenophobia.

56. The SERADE programme had launched a publicity campaign entitled "Deeds not words" to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The campaign denounced racism, ill-treatment and child exploitation. The SERADE programme had more than 1,200 volunteers and its own Website; nearly 172,000 people, mostly school and university students, had benefited from its activities.

57. Mr. KIRKYACHARIAN (Movement against Racism and for Friendship Among Peoples), speaking also on behalf of Centre Europe-Tiers Monde, said that racism was as old as ignorance and poverty but, in a large number of cases, ignorance and poverty were fed by the poison of racist demagogy. Racism was not only linked to structural inequality; it was its cruellest expression. The international community should launch programmes and finance campaigns against racist, xenophobic and neo-fascist propaganda. His organization had always supported agreement and cooperation between anti-racist organizations and other social organizations, primarily the trade unions; it had contributed to the establishment in October 1998 of an anti-racist network in the European Union.

58. The peril of racism was socially divisive, creating a kind of invisible, worldwide apartheid. The World Conference should be the occasion for assessing the threat which racism in its various forms represented to the modern world, whether it was a case of those without proper papers working for the organizers of the underground economy or the abominable tragedies caused by nationalism and ethnic cleansing. It was to be hoped that the World Conference would represent a turning point, with progress finally being made towards the effective enjoyment of human rights in equality and dignity.

59. Ms. TANAKA (International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism) said she welcomed the fact that the Special Rapporteur had dealt in his report with the situation of the Dalits, or scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, and had suggested a field mission to India. Caste discrimination was one of the most persistent forms of discrimination in Asia, and one that was largely ignored. Her organization noted with regret the

position of the Government of India that the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination was not applicable to discrimination against Dalits, despite the statement by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination that the situation of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes did fall within its purview.

60. Indian law, including the Indian Constitution, noted that the Dalits were one the most vulnerable groups in the country, but regrettably there had been no effective enforcement of the law and there were still many cases of discrimination, including attacks on Dalit villages by high-caste mobs. Dalits, and especially Dalit women, were continuously oppressed, cheated, tortured and exploited, including sexually, by dominant castes, politicians, police authorities and bureaucrats.

61. Her organization strongly recommended that the Special Rapporteur should visit Dalit communities in India, and if possible in other countries where caste discrimination existed, and make concrete recommendations for measures to be taken by the Governments concerned towards establishing a casteless society. Discrimination against Dalits in South Asia and other victims of perennial and persistent forms of discrimination should become a focus of special consideration at the forthcoming World Conference.

62. Lastly, noting that racial discrimination was very often compounded by gender discrimination, she said that her organization welcomed the initiative taken by members of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to draft a general recommendation on the gender-related dimensions of racial discrimination.

63. Mr. PERERA (World Federation of United Nations Associations) said that the proposed World Conference was an indictment of the indifference of Member States to their obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which had still to be ratified by more than 20 Member States with more than 130 States parties still not recognizing the competence of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to receive and consider communications from individuals or groups.

64. The vast majority of Member States had made no serious attempt to train and motivate teachers to educate the young to recognize and respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, more specifically with a view to combating racial discrimination. UNESCO had declared that the responsibility lay with the teaching profession, and it was therefore imperative that teachers' organizations commit themselves and their members to discharging that responsibility and ensuring that educational resources were used to combat racism.

65. Ms. FARHI (International Council of Jewish Women) said that her organization was alarmed at the rise in revisionist assertions that the genocide of the Jews by the Nazis had never occurred and that the Jews had lied about it in order to make the West feel guilty and enable them to create their State. The aim was to complete the physical destruction of a people.

Remembrance and mourning, the only way to learn the lessons of history, were under attack, opening the door to new crimes against humanity, whether in Kosovo, Bosnia, the African Great Lakes region, Cambodia or elsewhere.

66. The Internet could be used, without fear of punishment, to deny the holocaust and to spread fallacious theories and propaganda calling for racial hatred. The new technologies were increasingly being used not only by the extreme right, nationalist and anti-Semitic groups, but also by certain Islamic groups which had taken up revisionist ideas and also equated anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism. All Governments should pay special attention to the question of holocaust revisionism in their preparations for the World Conference.

67. Ms. PATTY (Interfaith International) said that religious ideologies and institutions could often, alas, be accused of racial discrimination, maintaining that they possessed the "truth" and that all others were therefore inferior. Such attitudes promoted intolerance and, indirectly, racism. Some unscrupulous religious leaders instigated discrimination against members of other religious groups in the name of religion. Consequently, religion in itself was no guarantee against racism and racial discrimination.

68. Researchers had recently discovered that all human beings came from the same stock of homo sapiens and that differences of pigmentation or bone shapes were simply the result of climate and environment, accidental mutations and hereditary patterns. Modern science had therefore invalidated ideologies based on racism and racial discrimination, a conclusion accepted by the United Nations.

69. The United Nations, which contained almost all the world's cultures, religions and ethnic groups, was in the best position to lay the foundation for the fight against racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia, whereas the world's religions had neglected the development of a set of ethical principles to deal realistically with those phemomena.

70. Ms. SRIVASTAVA (International Institute for Non-Aligned Studies) said that xenophobia was not born of economic backwardness: people who had little were far more willing to accept others. It was prosperity that brought with it a tendency to exclude others. Nations whose prosperity had been built on colonialism were closing their doors to those whom they had exploited to become rich, and forgetting the role played by immigrants in their prosperity. Nations created by destitute immigrants were currently fearful of newcomers and had introduced quotas based on racial considerations.

71. Some countries even made the process of obtaining a tourist visa an insulting experience for a brown or black person. Not surprisingly, such discrimination was practised most by countries with a colonialist past. Such countries preached dignity of the individual, while using the colour of a person's skin or the contents of his wallet to decide whether or not to grant him entry.

72. Mr. WAREHAM (International Association against Torture) said that the members of the Group of Western European and other States, particularly the United States of America, had no interest in supporting or publicizing the

World Conference. They feared that any focus on the transatlantic slave trade and its economics might serve to justify demands for compensation by the descendants of the enslaved and the countries of Africa from which they had been kidnapped. Moreover, the persistence of racism could be understood only by analysing its economic benefits for the descendants of the slave owners and colonialists.

73. The Secretariat, over which that Group wielded undue influence, had failed to hold consultations on the issue of a venue (his own organization suggested Brazil) or help States and regional organizations to convene regional meetings. The High Commissioner for Human Rights had not organized symposiums, seminars or worldwide consultations. Moreover, no steps had been taken to fund those meetings.

74. Another issue of concern to his organization was the tendency to defer to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination at the expense of the Commission's own mechanisms, namely, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities.

75. Ms. MANGUM (December Twelfth Movement), said that the transatlantic slave trade had been the most lucrative business of the seventeenth century and a number of major European cities could be said to be built on slave labour. The raw materials and capital generated by the trade had fuelled the commercial and industrial revolutions to the extent that it was fair to say that black slavery had been fundamental to the making of the modern world.

76. The World Conference would never achieve its goal of eradicating racism in the absence of an effort to combat the ideology of racism through education. Educational establishments also had a vital role to play in empowering the underprivileged and discriminated-against sectors of the population. In that connection, it was most regrettable that the City University of New York (CUNY) had, in 1976, when people of colour constituted the majority of its students, introduced tuition fees, thus preventing poor students from receiving a university education.

77. While appearing to accept the idea of a World Conference, the United States delegation was currently endeavouring to sabotage it. An example of its tactics had been heard that very morning in the statement by the United States representative, a Latino Woman, that the situation was not perfect but that the country was on the right track and in any case was far ahead of all others. The United States had used the same cynical approach in the past. Thus, when Cuba had been the focus of its attack, it had chosen a Cuban exile to head its delegation.

78. Ms. PLUMMER (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom), having expressed deep concern at the increase in racist and xenophobic incidents throughout the world and her regret that the otherwise commendable work on racism in the European Union had no apparent links with the extensive work of the United Nations on the issue, said that the fact that the Programme of

Action for the Third Decade and the preparations for the World Conference had not received the necessary financial assistance evidenced the de facto low priority given to the issue of racism.

79. Broad participation in the regional preparatory meetings for the World Conference was needed to identify local problems and find practical solutions consistent with international standards. Like the Special Rapporteur, she believed that NGOs must be a fundamental part of all preparations for the Conference and drew attention to the discussion paper: "To the open-ended working group on the World Conference" submitted by the NGO Sub-Committee against Racism and Racial Discrimination. Moreover, all delegations to the Conference, both governmental and non-governmental, must be as diverse as the populations they represented.

80. Ms. EKSTED (International Save the Children Alliance) said that, in Eastern and Central Europe, Roma children were overrepresented in orphanages, in homes for the "mentality disabled" and among those who had failed to complete their education. They were sent to "special schools", where they were the victims of racist abuse, were forced to live in ghettos without electricity, water or sanitation, and were then condemned as "dirty". They were regularly taken away from their parents and institutionalized, denied papers and citizenship and, in countries where schooling was linked to registration, denied education altogether.

81. In Western Europe, many traveller children lived in areas with no access to basic facilities. School attendance was difficult because they were constantly on the move. Schools were often reluctant to accept children who had had only intermittent eduction. Moreover, the settled population continued to discriminate against such children.

82. The Commission must urge the Governments concerned to prosecute racially motivated crimes of violence against Roma, Gypsy and traveller children and their families, ensure their protection by the police and eliminate all forms of discrimination against them.

83. Ms. SHAUMIAN (International Institute of Peace) said that her organization was concerned that, with the end of the cold war, people who had coexisted peacefully for generations were demanding territory based on ethnic or religious considerations, with a consequent redrawing of borders, mass transfers of population and death and destruction. Moreover, restrictive immigration policies based on colour, ethnic origin and creed and attacks against immigrant workers of backgrounds different from those of the majority had become increasingly common in the developed countries. Battles between sects of the same religion were taking place in Pakistan. Ethnic hatred continued to fuel the war in Afghanistan, and ethnic cleansing had taken place not only in Bosnia but also in Indian Kashmir.

84. Such issues were exploited by nations for strategic reasons. A prime example was Afghanistan, where the Pushtoon Taliban looked to Pakistan for support, while the Shi'a Hazaras looked to Iran. The dogma that the Pushtoons were the superior race and therefore the natural masters of Afghanistan was taught in the Taliban religious schools which had mushroomed throughout Pakistan.

85. Mr. BABA (Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation) said that extremist ideologies propagated among communities with similar or shared cultural and ethnic backgrounds could also give rise to xenophobic attitudes. That was particularly true in countries of old civilizations that had progressively absorbed different religious influences. In such cases, the distinction between communities was one not of race, but of religious affiliation.

86. Afghanistan and Pakistan were examples of countries in which the sacred Islamic concept of the jihad had been misused to cover persecution, rape, torture and murder. In some parts of southern Asia, Islamic schools had adopted a curriculum inculcating xenophobia in the name of Islam, a very dangerous trend which must not go unnoticed.

87. Groups within and outside Pakistan relied on xenophobic sentiment for conducting aggression against the people of Jammu and Kashmir in the name of Islam. Young recruits in training camps in Pakistan were taught to hate liberal and non-Muslim communities and were then sent out to kill, in the most barbaric way. Non-Muslim communities had recently been the target of so-called mujahidin sent across the border from Pakistan.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.